Science For Sale

America's real benefactors, her scientists and engineers, are handcuffed by the rules of the game of the Price System on which they must depend for their livelihood.

AS WE read the glowing self-praise of some of America's great industrial corporations, published in full-page color advertisements in nationally circulated publications, we might almost be convinced that the great research departments maintained by most of these great corporations are working solely for your benefit and that any profit derived by the companies from the work of scientists in their employ is purely incidental. Such, however, is far from being the case. For example, chemists who carefully work out a formula for the production of steel for razor blades which require replacement after only four or five shaves can hardly be said to be working in the public interest, when it is possible, by the addition of tungsten carbide, to produce blades which will last a lifetime. No; they are working in the interest of the manufacturers who employ them, and their purpose is to increase the profits of their employers—not to develop high-quality, long-lasting products.

PROFIT KEYNOTE OF RESEARCH

This is the keynote of industrial research today and will remain so for the duration of the Price System in America. Only when we have changed our social system and established one in

which price and profit have no place will this prostitution of science stop.

In his book, 'Cartels,' Wendell Berge, Assistant Attorney General of the United States, devotes one entire chapter to the effects of the activities of private research groups on the national welfare, and the picture he paints is not a pleasant one. There is a great gap between the promise of organized research conducted by great corporations and the fulfillment as measured by accomplishments in the public interest.

We do not disparage in any way the sincerity or the achievements of the scientists and research workers employed by private corporations. It is not their fault that their discoveries, important from the standpoint of the general welfare, must be subordinated to the interests of business. The public welfare is frequently at wide variance with that of business, but in a Price System business holds top priority.

Any research conducted under the auspices of private enterprise must, of necessity, be devoted to the interest of the individual enterprise financing the research. A research scientist working, for example, for the Shell Oil Co., is automatically barred from experimenting in fields other than those in which the Shell Company is interested. If, during the course of his experiments, he stumbles upon a discovery useful, say, to the radio industry, he may not pursue his experiments into that field. Dr. F. B. Jewett, Vice-President of the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. and Chief of the Bell Laboratories, made this clear during a discussion

concerning an agreement between his company and other parties. He said:

The far-reaching effect of the proposed agreement on the character and scope of our research and development work is apparent. Viewed both from the standpoint of the research worker in our laboratories and from the standpoint of those responsible for the expenditures incurred by the laboratories, the inevitable result would be a narrowing of the field of activity and failure to undertake anything which at the outset is not clearly directed to the field of our current business. From the standpoint of the man who has a brilliant idea which in its first nebulous form seems to be applicable outside our business, there will be little or no urge to go ahead in the face of a situation where he knows that the result of his work has been sold in advance outside of the Bell System. From the standpoint of management there will likewise be no incentive, but quite the reverse, to urging him on and appropriating money for his investigations.

Thus the scientist is handicapped in his work right from the start; he must work only along the lines indicated by the company employing his services.

Now suppose Professor X, working for the Radio Corporation of America, develops a new type of radio tube—one that will last indefinitely. What happens? Does RCA hail this discovery with joy and suitably reward the inventor? Not on your life! Such an invention would wreck the radio tube business and so must be suppressed. However, a patent is obtained to keep anyone else from manufacturing the tube, and the patent is shelved. We cite this example because just such a tube has been invented, utilizing radium activity; but private enterprise will probably never allow you to have it.

An automobile carburetor, invented by a Canadian and utilizing an entirely different principle of vaporization than is used in the conventional carburetor, has likewise been suppressed. This carburetor, tested on stock cars, reportedly gave over 200 miles to the gallon. Can you imagine what would happen to gasoline sales if such an invention were allowed to reach the market? Of course it would have benefited the motorist and would have greatly aided this nation in the conduct of the war *but*—it would have been very unprofitable for business.

LIFE OF FLASHLIGHTS REDUCED

One large manufacturer of electric lamps actually had its research staff working to reduce the life of its flashlight lamps. Here is a quotation from a letter, uncovered by investigators, which was written by one of the officials of this company:

We have been continuing our studies and efforts to bring about the use of one-battery lamps. I think you will be interested in the attached analysis which Messrs. Prideaux and Egeler have worked up covering the various points involved in going to the one battery life basis. If this were done, we estimate that it would result in increasing our flashlight business approximately 60 percent. We can see no logical reason either from our standpoint or that of the battery manufacturer why such a change should not be made at this time.

Perhaps not, but we could think of one or two reasons from the consumer's standpoint. However, as we have already pointed out, *he* doesn't count.

And now here is an outstanding example of the prostitution of science. A certain plastic, used in the industrial field to make

airplane windshielding and many other structural materials, also has excellent qualities for the making of dental plates or dentures. As a result of the monopoly control of this material by the DuPont Company and Rohm & Haas, its uses were divided into two fields, industrial and dental. At the time these firms were indicted a sharp difference in price was maintained. When this plastic was sold for industrial purposes it cost 85 cents a pound, but for dental purposes the same material brought $45 a pound. Naturally, when the dental profession discovered that it was the same material they started to buy from industrial users and thus save the difference.

The monopoly considered this a form of bootlegging and the steps they took to prevent it give us an excellent insight into the lengths to which private enterprise will go to protect its profits. On March 15, 1940, the Vernon-Benshoff Company, a member of the clique, wrote to Rohm & Haas Co. as follows:

Our discussion of the Pure Food and Drug Law and pulling the acrylic denture under it leads me to wonder if the manufacturers of the commercial powders might not add an ingredient which would not affect the molding properties, but which would disqualify it under the act. Apparently a slight trace would suffice. Naturally it would be omitted from the strictly denture powder.

Recently I asked Dr. Johnson to suggest an addition. He could not think of anything that wouldn't spoil the molding properties, or clarity of the powders. But there the quantity needed to accomplish the result was the handicap.

Under the very finicky regulations of the above act however, it may be the slightest trace of the right agent, too little to constitute harm to molding (or health either, as a matter of fact) would suffice to have bootleg products in bad.

A millionth of one percent of arsenic or lead might cause them to confiscate every bootleg unit in the country. There ought to be something that would make them rear up.

In its reply the Rohm & Haas Company said that it was in agreement with the general principles presented in the letter and that it *would ask its research department to work on the matter*.

Another striking example of the way in which research can be perverted for business reasons was uncovered in the dyestuffs industry. This industry is highly monopolistic and a tight control is maintained over its price structure. The DuPont research laboratories developed a pigment which can be utilized either in paints or as a dye for textiles. From a business standpoint this was undesirable as it would disturb the price structure of the textile dyestuffs field. And so the research department was put to work hunting for an adulterant that would make the pigment suitable for paints but no good for textiles. The thought process of the DuPont mind is revealed in the statement of one of the laboratory directors:

Further work may be necessary on adding contaminants to 'Monastral' colors to make them unsatisfactory on textiles but satisfactory for paints!

PUBLIC WELFARE IMMATERIAL

Many 'solutions' were tried or suggested: ground glass or carborundum, they said, might be added to the pigment, thus scratching the printing rollers used in printing the textiles; ingredients might be added hat would deteriorate the cloth; certain resins or solvents which would irritate the skin might be added to the pigment to be used on textiles.

These and many other suggestions were followed up by this perverted research organization and the final conclusion was that pigment mixtures suitable for paints but unsuitable for textile printing would be very difficult to obtain.

This, then, is the objective of private research organizations, sponsored by free enterprise: to develop only such products as shall be profitable to the sponsoring company and to suppress any discovery which tends to disturb the price structure. The public welfare is of no concern to the proponents of free enterprise. No doubt the public does benefit to some degree from these research activities but the great corporations decide how great that benefit shall be. The public has nothing to say about it.

Naturally, research carried on under such conditions is contrary to the public welfare, and our first reaction is of course to blame the corporations under whose direction it is done. But we are maintaining a method of social operation which requires that a profit be made on any transaction of a business nature. Without that profit, business cannot operate and we lose the product of that business altogether. A striking example is to be seen in the current butter shortage. The OPA, in its efforts to keep the steadily rising cost of living from getting out of hand, has placed a ceiling of 45 cents a pound on butter fat to be used in the manufacture of butter. However, butterfat is a vital ingredient in the manufacture of certain plastics, and for this purpose no ceiling has been placed on the price. Consequently dairymen are selling it to the manufacturers for 80 or 85 cents a pound. The ceiling of 45 cents does not permit the dairyman to make a reasonable margin of profit, so the public must get along without butter. Can you, in all

fairness, blame the dairyman? Of course not. He wants to stay in business—just as the large corporations do. So, before you start blaming individuals or groups or corporations, realize that they are only acting in accordance with the rules of the game of the Price System. One of those rules requires a quick turnover of merchandise. It must wear out quickly in order that it may be replaced and thus keep the manufacturer in business, and if research, under private enterprise, is directed along these lines it is only because that is the way private enterprise must operate to stay in business. If you, as the innocent bystander, get hurt in the process it is your own fault. Any time you don't like it,—change the rules.

WE GOT THE BOMB

The development of the atomic bomb was accomplished, not by private research, but by *Government research*. The United States Government, together with the Governments of Great Britain and Canada, provided the money, the materials, the equipment and the scientists to develop the bomb. For once there were no restrictions on the work of these men. The result is a notable example of what can be accomplished under such conditions. Please note here that these research workers HAD COMPLETE AUTHORITY TO CUT INTO THE FLOW LINES OF ANY INDUSTRY IN THE FURTHERANCE OF ANY EXPERIMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THAT PROJECT. The 'Manhattan Project,' as it was called, had top priority over anything that was being done in the United States at that time. There were no limitations of price or profit; there was no consideration of its effects on future or present markets. We had to have the bomb and

all *the usual Price System barriers were down*. Result: We got the bomb.

Now, however, the war is over and the barriers are up again. Atomic energy is a threat to the status quo and must be suppressed. And, as long as private enterprise is in the saddle, *it will be suppressed*.

Now let us see what can be accomplished in a social system free from the handicaps we have described—a social system in which there is neither price nor profit. Such would be the functional society of the Technate—the name given to the social design proposed by Technocracy Inc. for the social operation of the North American Continent.

Let us understand clearly that this is not an arbitrary design to be forced on the American people whether they like it or not, but a carefully designed method of social operation, compatible with our scientific development, the extent of our available natural resources, and social desirability. It is intended to be installed by the American people themselves when our present system is no longer workable. Technocracy points out that that time is near at hand and we must be prepared to install this functional society in the near future or suffer social chaos as a result of our failure to do so. The Technate is the next step in the evolution of society on the North American Continent and as such all Americans must understand its probable method of operation.

RESOURCES PLUS RESEARCH

America has reached its present stage of development, in which by technological processes it is possible to produce actual physical abundance, as a direct result of scientific research together with abundant natural resources. America is the most highly developed technological nation in the world and is now capable, once the necessary social design is installed, of producing and distributing an abundance to all its citizens—the first time this has been possible for any nation in the history of the world. We can, at any time, provide more than can be conveniently used by any individual. We can guarantee complete security for every American from the cradle to the grave at the highest standard of living ever dreamed of. All this has been brought about by scientific research and engineering genius. Therefore it is obvious that we must, in the future, guarantee that scientific research shall continue uninterrupted and unfettered.

Every facility must be provided our scientists and research workers so that they may retain the commanding lead they now hold over other nations of the world.

And now, let us consider the case of the individual inventor—you know, the little guy who wants to build a better mousetrap. What chance does he have today? We are told that the world will beat a path to his door: but does it? Not so you could notice. If someone else doesn't beat him out of his patent rights to begin with, he still has the little problem of financing his gadget. Then comes the problem of manufacturing, marketing, advertising, and a host of other troubles which seem to pile up on the little business man today. And suppose he is working on something more complicated and requires help. Where can he go? Never mind what

kind of help—that doesn't matter. It may be financial or technical but the answer is the same. He may be lucky and get it and, on the other hand, he may not. In the Technate, however, he would simply call upon the Research Sequence for whatever technical help he needed and it would be forthcoming. He wouldn't need financial help. And when he had developed his idea, what then? The Research Sequence would test it and if it proved of practical value it would be put into use. No, the inventor wouldn't receive any material reward—he wouldn't need any—but he would have the satisfaction of seeing his invention serving others. And he would enjoy the social recognition to which his invention would entitle him. The day of suppressed patents would be over. Thousands now suppressed would be in use and scientific research, no longer conducted for private profit, would at last be serving the public welfare. Science will no longer be for sale.

11834-1

Technocracy Incorporated - Northwest Technocrat - June 1946

http://archive.org/details/NorthwestTechnocrat-June1946